CLAIMS

1.   An apparatus, comprising:

a housing;

a user authenticator, supported by the housing, that authenticates an identity of a

5   user;

at least one memory, supported by the housing, that stores transaction information for at least first and second media; and

at least one output, supported by the housing, that releases at least a portion of the transaction information to a point-of-sale (POS) terminal after the user authenticator has

10   authenticated the identity of the user.

2.   The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the user authenticator comprises means for authenticating the identity of the user by analyzing a bio-metric feature of the user.

3.   The apparatus of claim 2, further comprising means for authenticating the

15   identity of the user without releasing information regarding the bio-metric feature of the user outside the housing.

4.   The apparatus of claim 1, further comprising at least one controller

20   supported by the housing and coupled to each of the user authenticator, the at least one memory, and the at least one output, the at least one controller being configured such that, after the user authenticator has authenticated the identity of the user, the at least one controller causes the portion of the transaction information to be released to the POS terminal via the at least one output.

25

5.   The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the at least first and second media are issued by first and second different and unrelated media issuers.

6.   The apparatus of claim 1, wherein authentication information employed

30   by the user authenticator to authenticate the identity of the user is located within the housing and does not leave the housing when the user authenticator authenticates the identity of the user.

7.   The apparatus of claim 6, wherein the authentication information includes information regarding a bio-metric feature of the user.

8.   The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the total volume consumed by the housing is less than five hundred cubic centimeters.

9.   A method, comprising steps of:

(a) storing transaction information for at least first and second media in a memory of a device;

(b) using the device to authenticate an identity of a user; and

(c) after authenticating the identity of the user with the device, transferring at least a portion of the transaction information from the device to a point-of-sale (POS) terminal.

10.   The method of claim 9, wherein the step (b) includes analyzing a bio-metric feature of the user to authenticate the user's identity.

11.   The method of claim 9, wherein the at least first and second media are issued by first and second different and unrelated media issuers.

12.   The method of claim 9, wherein authentication information employed by the user authenticator to authenticate the identity of the user is located within a housing of the device, and wherein the step (b) is performed without releasing the authentication information outside of the housing.

13.   The method of claim 12, wherein the authentication information includes information regarding a bio-metric feature of the user.

14.   An apparatus, comprising:

a housing;

at least one memory, supported by the housing, that stores transaction information for at least one media;

a user authenticator, supported by the housing, that authenticates an identity of a user of the apparatus; and

5   at least one output, supported by the housing, that, after the user authenticator has authenticated the identity of the user, releases an embedded identification code of the apparatus from the housing that enables a device receiving the embedded identification code to authenticate the identity of the apparatus.

10   15.   The apparatus of claim 14, further comprising at least one controller supported by the housing and coupled to each of the user authenticator, the at least one memory, and the at least one output, the at least one controller being configured such that, after the user authenticator has authenticated the identity of the user, the at least one controller causes the embedded identification code to be released from the housing via

15   that at least one output.

16.   A method, comprising steps of:

storing transaction information for at least one media in a memory of a first device;

20   using the first device to authenticate an identity of a user; and

after authenticating the identity of the user with the first device, releasing an embedded identification code of the apparatus from the housing that enables a second device receiving the embedded identification code to authenticate the identity of the first device.

25

17.   The method of claim 16, further comprising steps of:

receiving the identification code with the second device; and

authorizing a transaction request by the first device based on the received identification code.

30

18.   An apparatus, comprising:

at least one memory that stores transaction information for at least first and second media;

at least one input that enables a user to select one of the at least first and second media;

a display that provides a visual indication to the user regarding which of the at least first and second media has been selected with the at least one input; and

at least one output that selectively releases at least a portion of the transaction information to a point-of-sale (POS) terminal.

19.   The apparatus of claim 18, wherein the at least first and second media are issued by first and second different and unrelated media issuers.

20.   The apparatus of claim 18, wherein the total volume consumed by the housing is less than five hundred cubic centimeters.

21.   A method, comprising steps of:

storing transaction information for at least first and second media in a memory of a device;

receiving as input to the device a user's selection of one of the at least first and second media;

displaying with the device a visual indication to the user regarding which of the at least first and second media has been selected; and

transferring at least a portion of the transaction information from the device to a point-of-sale (POS) terminal.

22.   The apparatus of claim 21, wherein the at least first and second media are issued by first and second different and unrelated media issuers.

23.   An apparatus, comprising:

at least one memory that stores transaction information for at least one financial media and at least one non-financial media; and

at least one output that selectively releases at least a portion of the transaction information to a point-of-sale (POS) terminal.

24. The apparatus of claim 23, further comprising at least one controller coupled to each of the at least one memory and the at least one output, the at least one controller being configured to cause the portion of the transaction information to be released to the POS terminal via the at least one output.

25. The apparatus of claim 23, wherein the at least one output comprises magnetic stripe simulation means for simulating a magnetic stripe readable by the POS terminal.

26. The apparatus of claim 23, wherein the at least one output comprises bar code generation means for generating a bar code readable by the POS terminal.

27. The apparatus of claim 23, wherein the at least one output comprises transmission means for wirelessly transmitting the portion of the information to the POS terminal.

28. The apparatus of claim 23, wherein the at least one output comprises connection means for establishing a Smartcard-compatible connection with the POS terminal.

29. A method, comprising steps of:
storing transaction information for at least one financial media and at least one non-financial media in a memory of a device; and
transferring at least a portion of the transaction information from the device to a point-of-sale (POS) terminal.

30. A system, comprising:
a housing;

at least one memory, supported by the housing, that stores transaction information for at least one media;

a device releasably attached to the housing; and

configuring means, supported by the housing, for selectively configuring the device to hold the transaction information so that the device may be used to engage in a transaction involving the at least one media.

31.   The system of claim 30, wherein the configuring means comprises magnetic stripe simulation means for simulating a magnetic stripe readable by a point-of-sale terminal.

32.   The system of claim 30, wherein the configuring means comprises bar code generation means for generating a bar code readable by a point-of-sale terminal.

33.   The system of claim 30, wherein the configuring means comprises means for displaying information visibly on the device.

34.   A method, comprising steps of:

(a) storing transaction information for at least one media in a memory of a first device, the first device having a second device releasably attached thereto;

(b) while the second device is attached to the first device, configuring the second device to hold the transaction information for the at least one media based on the contents of the memory;

(c) detaching the second device from the first device; and

(d) using the second device to engage in a transaction involving the at least one media.

35.   The method of claim 34, wherein the step (b) includes simulating a magnetic stripe readable by a point-of-sale terminal.

36.   The method of claim 34, wherein the step (b) includes generating a bar code readable by a point-of-sale terminal.

37.   The method of claim 34, wherein the step (b) includes displaying information visibly on the device.

5   38.   A system, comprising:

a first device including a user authenticator that authenticates an identity of a user; and

a second device releasably attached to the first device, wherein the second device holds transaction information for at least one media so that the second device may be

10   used to engage in a transaction involving the at least one media, and wherein the second device is detached from the first device after the user authenticator has authenticated the identity of the user.

39.   The system of claim 38, wherein the user authenticator comprises means for authenticating the identity of the user by analyzing a bio-metric feature of the user.

40.   The system of claim 38, wherein the second device has embedded therein an identification code which permits a device receiving the identification code to authenticate the identity of the second device.

20

41.   A method, comprising steps of:

with a first device, authenticating an identity of a user; and

after authenticating the identity of a user with the first device, detaching a second device from the first device, the second device holding transaction information for at

25   least one media so that the second device may be used to engage in a transaction involving the at least one media.

42.   A system, comprising:

a first device;

30   a second device that has the first device releasably attached thereto, the second device including means for selectively configuring the first device to hold transaction information for a first media but not for a second media so that the first device may be

used to engage in a transaction involving the first media but not the second media, and the second device further including means for selectively configuring the first device to hold transaction information for the second media but not for the first media so that the first device may be used to engage in a transaction involving the second media but not

5   the first media.

43.   A method, comprising steps of:

selectively configuring a device to hold transaction information for a first media but not for a second media so that the device may be used to engage in a transaction

10   involving the first media but not the second media; and

selectively configuring the device to hold transaction information for the second media but not the first media so that the device may be used to engage in a transaction involving the second media but not the first media.

15   44.   A system, comprising:

at least one memory that stores first transaction information for a first media;

at least one output that selectively releases at least a portion of the first transaction information to a point-of-sale (POS) terminal; and

means for enabling a person to whom the first media is issued to selectively add

20   second transaction information for a second media to the memory.

45.   The system of claim 44, further comprising at least one controller coupled to each of the at least one memory and the at least one output, the at least one controller being configured to cause the portion of the first transaction information to be released to

25   the POS terminal via the at least one output.

46.   A method, comprising steps of:

storing first transaction information for a first media in a memory of a device;

releasing at least a portion of the first transaction information to a point-of-sale

30   (POS) terminal; and

in response to a request by the person to whom the first transaction information is issued, adding second transaction information for a second media to the memory.

47.   A system, comprising:

at least one memory that stores first transaction information for a first media and second transaction information for a second media;

at least one output that selectively releases at least a portion of the first transaction information to a point-of-sale (POS) terminal; and

means for enabling a person to whom the first media is issued to selectively remove at least a portion of the second transaction information from the memory.

48.   The system of claim 47, further comprising at least one controller coupled to each of the at least one memory and the at least one output, the at least one controller being configured to cause the portion of the first transaction information to be released to the POS terminal via the at least one output.

49.   A method, comprising steps of:

storing first transaction information for a first media and second transaction information for a second media in a memory of a device;

releasing at least a portion of the first transaction information to a point-of-sale (POS) terminal; and

in response to a request by the person to whom the second media is issued, removing at least a portion of the second transaction information from the memory.

50.   A system, comprising:

at least one memory that stores transaction information for at least one media;

at least one output that selectively releases at least a portion of the transaction information to a point-of-sale (POS) terminal; and

means for enabling at least one functional characteristic of the at least one media to be altered by altering the contents of the least one memory.

51.   The system of claim 50, wherein the means for enabling includes at least one network server, a station adapted to selectively interface with the at least one controller and coupled to the at least one network server, and a media issuer computer

coupled to the at least one network server, and wherein the altering of the information is initiated at the media issuer computer.

52.   The system of claim 50, wherein the means for enabling includes a station adapted to selectively interface with the at least one controller, and wherein the altering of the information is initiated at the station.

53.   The system of claim 50, wherein the means for enabling is supported by a housing in which the at least one controller is disposed.

54.   The system of claim 50, further comprising at least one controller coupled to each of the at least one memory and the at least one output, the at least one controller being configured to cause the portion of the first transaction information to be released to the POS terminal via the at least one output.

55.   A method, comprising:
storing transaction information for at least one media in a memory of a device;
releasing at least a portion of the transaction information to a point-of-sale (POS) terminal; and
altering at least one functional characteristic of the at least one media by altering the contents of the least one memory.

56.   An apparatus, comprising:
a housing;
a user authenticator, supported by the housing, that authenticates an identity of a user;
at least one memory that, supported by the housing, stores first transaction information for a first media and second transaction information for a second media; and
at least one output, supported by the housing, that releases the first transaction information only after the user authenticator has authenticated the identity of the user, and that releases the second information without requiring the user authenticator to have authenticated the identity of the user.

57.   The system of claim 56, wherein the user authenticator comprises means for authenticating the identity of the user by analyzing a bio-metric feature of the user.

5   58.   The system of claim 56, further comprising at least one controller supported by the housing and coupled to each of the user authenticator, the at least one memory, and the at least one output, the at least one controller being configured to cause the first transaction information to be released via the at least one output only after the user authenticator has authenticated the identity of the user, and to cause the second

10   information to be released via the at least one output without requiring the user authenticator to have authenticated the identity of the user.

59.   A method, comprising steps of:

storing first transaction information for a first media and second transaction

15   information for a second media in at least one memory of a device;

using the device to authenticate an identity of a user;

releasing the first transaction information only after the identity of the user has been authenticated; and

releasing the second transaction information without requiring the identity of the

20   user to be authenticated.

60.   A system, comprising:

a first device; and

a second device having the first device releasably attached thereto such that,

25   when the first device is attached to the second device, the second device causes the first device to generate a machine-readable code for only a predetermined, finite period of time after the first device is detached from the second device.

61.   The system of claim 60, wherein the machine-readable code is generated

30   as a simulated magnetic stripe on the first device.

62.   The system of claim 60, wherein the machine-readable code is generated as a bar code on the first device.

63.   A method, comprising a step of:

generating a machine-readable code on a device for only a predetermined, finite period of time.

64.   The method of claim 63, wherein the machine-readable code is generated as a simulated magnetic stripe on the device.

65.   The method of claim 63, wherein the machine-readable code is generated as a bar code on the device.

66.   The method of claim 63, wherein the device is untethered when the machine-readable code is generated thereon.

67.   An apparatus, comprising:

a portable substrate;

a power supply supported by the substrate; and

at least one controller supported by the substrate and powered by the power supply, the at least one controller being configured to generate a simulated magnetic stripe on the substrate.

68.   The apparatus of claim 67, wherein the at least one controller is configured and arranged to generate a simulated magnetic stripe on the substrate when substrate is untethered.

69.   A method, comprising a step of:

generating a simulated magnetic stripe on a portable device.

70.   A system, comprising:

at least one memory that stores transaction information for at least one media;

a user authenticator that authenticates an identity of the user; and

a display that provides a visual indication to the user regarding the at least one media, the visual indication being displayed for only a predetermined, finite period of time after the user authenticator has authenticated the identity of the user.

5

71. The system of claim 70, wherein the user authenticator comprises means for authenticating the identity of the user by analyzing a bio-metric feature of the user.

72. A method, comprising steps of:

10 authenticating an identity of a user; and

displaying a visual indication to the user regarding the at least one media for only a predetermined, finite period of time after authenticating the identity of the user.

73. A system, comprising:

15 a portable device that can be used to engage in point-of-sale (POS) transactions; and

a device remote from the portable device that can disable an ability of the portable device to engage in POS transactions.

20 74. A method, comprising steps of:

providing a portable device that can be used to engage in point-of-sale transactions; and

at a location remote from the portable device, disabling an ability of the portable device to engage in POS transactions.

25

75. A method, comprising steps of:

storing transaction authorization information for at least two media in a first memory of a first device; and

storing the transaction authorization information for the at least two media in a

30 second memory, which is disposed at a location remote from the first device.

76. The method of claim 75, further comprising a step of transferring the transaction authorization information stored in the second memory to the first memory.

77. The method of claim 76, further comprising a step of transferring the transaction authorization information stored in the first memory to the second memory.

78. The method of claim 75, further comprising a step of transferring the transaction authorization information stored in the first memory to the second memory.

79. A system, comprising:

a first device; and

a second device having the first device releasably attached thereto such that, when the first device is attached to the second device, the second device can cause the first device to generate a machine-readable code after the first device is detached from the second device, the second device including at least one controller configured so as to be capable of causing the first device to generate the machine-readable code only for a finite, predetermined period of time.

80. The system of claim 79, wherein the machine-readable code is generated as a simulated magnetic stripe on the first device.

81. The system of claim 79, wherein the machine-readable code is generated as a bar code on the first device.

82. The system of claim 79, wherein the at least one controller configured so as to be capable of causing the first device to generate the machine-readable code only during a finite, predetermined time window in the future.

83. A method, comprising a step of:

configuring a first device such that the first device is capable, for only a predetermined, finite period of time, of generating a machine-readable code on a second device.

84.   The method of claim 83, wherein the first device is capable of generating the machine-readable code as a simulated magnetic stripe on the second device.

85.   The method of claim 83, wherein the first device is capable of generating the machine-readable code as a bar code on the second device.

86.   The method of claim 83, wherein the step (a) includes configuring the first device such that the first device is capable, for only a predetermined, finite window of time in the future, of generating the machine-readable code on the second device.

87.   A method, comprising steps of:

receiving information at a first device that has been transmitted over an electronic communication link; and

after receiving the information at the first device, using a media at the first device to access a quantity of credit or cash reserves that could not be accessed prior to the first device receiving the information.